

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **HOOSIERS URGED TO PREPARE FOR RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES**

INDIANAPOLIS—Fall is approaching and winter is just around the corner. Hoosiers are being urged to take preventative steps to prepare for the cold weather, when respiratory diseases will be circulating the most.

“September is National Preparedness Month, and it is a good time to think about preparing for the coming cold weather by taking steps to prevent respiratory diseases,” said State Health Commissioner Gregory N. Larkin, M.D.

State health officials are identifying two respiratory illnesses as being of particular concern: influenza (flu) and pertussis (whooping cough). The 2010-2011 flu season is approaching, and the 2009 H1N1 flu virus is expected to be circulating.

In addition, the Indiana State Department of Health is reporting a rise in pertussis cases in the state, with 368 to date (compared to 392 in 2009).

“Although the 2009 H1N1 flu virus mostly caused mild disease during the 2009-2010 flu pandemic, influenza is unpredictable,” said Dr. Larkin. “The current seasonal flu vaccine protects against it and two other flu strains. The best way to ensure a mild flu season is to get vaccinated.”

Unlike influenza, which is caused by viruses, pertussis is a contagious illness caused by bacteria. People of all ages can develop pertussis, but the disease tends to be more severe in infants. Adults with milder, undiagnosed symptoms can transmit the disease to infants and children. Pertussis is usually spread by contact with an infected person’s nose or throat secretions.

“Despite their differences, one important thing influenza and pertussis have in common is there are safe, effective vaccines for each,” said Dr. Larkin. “We urge parents get their children aged 6 months to 18 years vaccinated with the seasonal flu vaccine and to ensure their children are up to date on their diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP) series.”

Dr. Larkin says adults should also get the seasonal flu vaccine each year and get the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine as a replacement for the every-10-year tetanus booster recommended for adults.

There are some additional steps people can take to prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including influenza and pertussis:

- Clean - properly wash your hands frequently,
- Cover - cover your cough and sneeze, and
- Contain - contain your germs by staying home (or keep children at home from school) if sick.

“It’s important to prepare for flu season by planning in advance to take care of yourself or a family member if they become ill,” says IDHS Executive Director Joe Wainscott. “For instance, know how administrators will get a hold of you if your child becomes ill at school, and make sure you understand your work place policies on working from home if you need to care for an ill family member. Making these plans now can help alleviate stress during an illness.”

For updates on this and other public health issues, follow the Indiana State Department of Health on Twitter at: [www.twitter.com/INPublicHealth](https://www.twitter.com/INPublicHealth), or go online for more info at: [www.statehealth.IN.gov](http://www.statehealth.IN.gov).

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